

JOUR 322: Introduction to Investigative and Data Journalism

2 units

Fall 2022 – Wednesdays – 6:45-8:25 p.m.

Section: 21178D

Location: ANN 408

Instructor: Grace Manthey

Office Hours: By appointment (in-person or zoom)

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Pronouns: she/her/hers

Course Description

This course builds on the beat reporting skills you developed in JOUR 207/307 Reporting and Writing I and II. It's an introduction to the fundamentals of investigative and data journalism – identifying and getting primary and secondary sources, quantitatively analyzing datasets, summarizing facts and opinions, and fact checking.

JOUR 322 is a research skills class to equip you to go beyond anecdotal reporting and into a systematic examination of the factors driving a major societal issue. This semester we will tackle a multitude of datasets, such as population, crime and environmental data. The final is a research brief and pitch that may require you to have an understanding of government jurisdictions, the criminal justice system, how data is collected and more that will give you a foundation for covering many different topics.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Analyze a raw dataset.
 - a. Describe what questions a dataset can and can't answer.
 - b. Identify and explain the biases in the way data is collected, analyzed and reported, and how these biases have contributed to systemic inequities.
 - c. Use AP Style guidelines to write precisely and accurately about race and ethnicity.
 - d. Categorize and add additional information to a raw dataset.
 - e. Prepare a data dictionary that documents what's in each column and identifies missing and problematic data issues.
2. Use math and Excel to "interview" data to answer research questions about possible stories.
 - a. Calculate absolute vs. relative change; fractions, rates, percentages and per capita; averages and medians.
 - b. Use reader-friendly techniques in stories such as rounding numbers and writing paragraphs that include fewer than eight digits.
 - c. Use Excel as a qualitative data organizing tool.
3. Using a template, compile and summarize relevant information from primary source documents for an investigative story.

- a. Select the relevant facts from an analysis of a dataset and identify the biases, missing data and other caveats that affect the use of the dataset in a story.
- b. Locate, log and summarize documents and processes from law enforcement agencies, district attorneys, federal civil courts and select secondary sources.
- c. File Freedom of Information Act or California Public Records requests for primary source documents.
- d. Write research briefs suitable for a general news audience and annotate them using industry-standard fact checker notations.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

1. Weekly assignments

There will be weekly assignments due **at the beginning of each class**. Assignments will usually have two components – an Excel worksheet with calculations from raw data, and a write-up and/or short answers based on the data.

Grading for the weekly assignments will be largely based on your analysis, interpretation and write-up of data vs. your Excel skills. Each question or component will have a point value and a grading rubric.

Each week's assignments build on the previous week's, so **please do not be late with your assignments**. I will help with any aspect of any assignment if needed. However, if you need help please do not wait until the day it is due. We will start most of the assignments in class, so please come to me for help before it is due. Do not turn in incomplete assignments.

2. Interview with an investigative or data journalist and write-up

This assignment will help you explore what it takes to report and produce an investigative or data journalism story. It will be assigned in Week 2, and will be due in Week 9.

3. Final project

The final is a collection of documents summarizing your research into a dataset, along with a list of possible sources, follow up questions for those sources, and a list of additional assets you would need if you wanted to do pursue this story.

Course Notes and Policies

Please be courteous to me and your classmates by arriving on time and being fully engaged. Regular attendance will be crucial for successfully completing the weekly assignments and the final project. The scope of the work and the interpretations and context that should be in the write-ups will be determined by class discussion, similar to how a newsroom team operates.

We will be researching the details behind some data that might deal with sensitive topics. Please let me know if you or any of your classmates are struggling with the materials, discussions and/or assignments.

Suggested readings, hardware/software, laptops and supplementary materials

1. ***Numbers in the Newsroom: Using Math and Statistics in News, Second Edition***, by Sarah Cohen for Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc., 2014, 134 pages.
Available for \$10 via [the IRE website](#).

This handbook includes explanations about the quantitative concepts in the course and guidelines about writing about numbers that I'll be referring to – and grading you on – throughout the semester.

2. *The Associated Press Stylebook*

Available for free from [the USC Library \(must be signed in\)](#).

All assignments will be graded for AP Style. Expressing numbers in a consistent style is essential to communicating data accurately, clearly and credibly. A summary of the AP Style guidelines for numbers is on Blackboard.

You will be completing a video lesson module to help you learn the AP Style guidelines when describing gender, race and ethnicity when appropriate in a story. From the AP Stylebook: “In all coverage – not just race-related coverage – strive to accurately represent the world, or a particular community, and its diversity through the people you quote and depict in all formal. Omissions and a lack of inclusion can render people invisible and cause anguish.”

3. Knight Science Journalism - MIT Fact-Checking Project

You will be using the industry-standard fact-checking methodologies outlined in this module throughout the semester.

Computer Policy

Hardware and software support is available from USC Annenberg Technical Services and Operations at <http://annenbergtechops.com/techops>. Blackboard support is available 24/7 by calling 213-740-5555.

Software

Microsoft Office 365 or Office 2016 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) is required. It is available for free to USC students at itservices.usc.edu/officestudents.

Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Weekly assignments	65%
Interview with an investigative reporter and write-up	5%
Participation	5%
Final project	25%
TOTAL	100%

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D

87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

c. Grading Standards

Each assignment will have its own rubric. Each rubric will include a component for grammar, punctuation, spelling, AP Style, number formatting and rounding.

Below are some common components for all assignments. Due to the quantitative aspects of this course, you will be held to a higher standard for accuracy than what you may be used to. A typo in a word is minor editing; a typo with a number is a material factual error.

“A” stories are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor copyediting (i.e., they would be aired or published). The data, calculations and any data visualizations are correct and complete, and use Excel as directed. Data sources are correctly presented.

“B” stories require more than minor editing and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission.

“C” stories need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or material or omission errors.

“D” stories require excessive rewriting, have numerous errors and should not have been submitted.

“F” stories have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, are late, have numerous errors or both.

For example:

- It doesn't use the correct data or calculations.
- It misspells a proper noun and/or doesn't use the full and proper name for a dataset.
- It states a hypothesis as a fact.

The following are some other circumstances that would warrant a grade of “F” and potential USC Annenberg disciplinary action:

- Emailing, texting or otherwise communicating in-class quiz or assignment questions and/or answers to others.
- Fabricating data or making up quotes or other information.
- Plagiarizing a script/article, part of a script/article or information from any source.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/22/22 – 12/2/22)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20223/calendar/>

Friday, September 9: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to change enrollment option to audit for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass to a letter grade for Session 001

Friday, September 9: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Tuesday, September 13: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, October 7: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, November 11: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

Course Schedule – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Week	Topics/Datasets	Quantitative / Excel / Assignment
Week 1 – Aug. 24	Introduction to the class <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class survey • How much data is out there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up Excel Quick Access Toolbars • Survey Assignment
Week 2 – Aug. 31	Data summaries and dictionaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airbnb data • Hospital building data • Biases in data and the way it’s gathered • Data dictionaries • <i>How would we write/visualize this?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing a list: Ranges, averages, medians • Difference between them and how to describe them
Week 3 – Sept. 7	Populations and change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Census data & geographies • Biases in Census data • COVID Data • AP Style guidelines on race and ethnicity • <i>How would we write/visualize this?</i> <p>Interview with an investigative or data journalist assignment assigned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering data from data.census.gov • Absolute (amount) vs. relative (percent) change
Week 4 – Sept. 14	Calculating and comparing racial composition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Los Angeles County • City of Los Angeles vs. LAPD • Racial breakdown of different occupations vs population • SoCal geography/jurisdictions • <i>How would we write/visualize this?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent share; percentage points
Week 5 – Sept. 21	Data over time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID data • FBI Crime data • Nuances of these datasets • <i>How would we write/visualize this?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly/monthly averages • Importance of comparing data over time
Week 6 – Sept. 28	Rates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cal Enviro Screen Data (Trees) • COVID data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates: rate per X people/1 out of every x people

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How would we write/visualize this?</i> 	
Week 7 – Oct. 5	<p>Jargon & definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime data • LAPD data • Other jurisdiction data (LASD) • <i>How would we write/visualize this?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filling in blanks • Interpreting data definitions • Dataset as reporting tool: “need to find out” • Pivot tables
Week 8 – Oct. 12	<p>Final project: Where to start?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Datasets themselves • One-off stories • Tips • What are people saying vs what is actually happening? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find three stories that could be expanded on from a data/investigative standpoint • Find a dataset that could help expand each story
Week 9 – Oct. 19	<p>Inspection reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of records exist? • CMS data • HUD data • <i>How would we write/visualize this?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different ways of quantifying inspection reports
Week 10 – Oct. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal vs. state courts • Annotating documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDF document assignment TBD
Week 11 – Nov. 2	<p>When information isn’t available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California Public Records Act information requests • Creating your own dataset: examples/best practices • What do to when data is missing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit a California Records Act Request • Choose your dataset/topic for your final project
Week 12 – Nov. 9	<p>Visualizing data & investigations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When to use what • Maps, Tables, Graphs • Interactive vs static • Broadcast vs text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create one interactive, one text-friendly and one TV friendly static visualization of your choice for using the dataset for your final project
Week 13 – Nov. 16	<p>When you’re ready to pitch/report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact checking and annotations for primary and secondary source documents • Final project workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact checking assignment • Final project prep
Week 14 – Nov. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NO CLASS – Thanksgiving break 	
Week 15 – Nov. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final project workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final project prep
Final Exam Period – Dec. 7, 7-9 p.m.	<p>Summative experience</p> <p>Final project is due on Wed., Dec. 7, by 9 p.m.</p>	

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion

of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism or public relations class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

<https://eeotix.usc.edu/>

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

osas.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/note takers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

About Your Instructor

Grace Manthey is a data journalist at ABC7/KABC. She's done stories on a multitude of topics from hospital earthquake ratings to police diversity to tree cover disparities in Los Angeles. She loves to build interactive tools for these stories and learned her much of her data journalism basics from her time in the MS program at USC! She graduated with her master's in Journalism in 2019, after getting her bachelor's in journalism in 2018 from Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. She is passionate about data journalism and loves when students find out how awesome it is too!